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## Viewing cable 05BEIRUT3670, MGLE01: DEFENSE MINISTER MURR SAYS ARMY UNABLE TO

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### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#05BEIRUT3670**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">05BEIRUT3670</a>	<a href="#">2005-11-14 08:51</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">SECRET</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Beirut</a>

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NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/WERNER/SINGH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/08/2015  
TAGS: [KPAL](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [MCAP](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [SY](#) [LE](#)  
SUBJECT: MGLE01: DEFENSE MINISTER MURR SAYS ARMY UNABLE TO  
CONFRONT MILITIAS

Classified By: Christopher W. Murray, Charge d'Affaires.  
Reason: Section 1.4 (d).

¶1. (S) In a November 8 meeting with NEA DAS Elizabeth Dibble, the Ambassador, the defense attache, and econoff, Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Elias Murr said that he is trying to transform the Lebanese military after 15 years of Syrian direction. He wanted to change the "Syrian mentality" present in training and procedure. Syria continues to support terrorist groups in Lebanon, said Murr, including the "well-trained, well-equipped army" of Hizballah. Lebanon cannot enjoy security until the Syrian regime changes its mentality, said Murr. When Dibble mentioned the continued existence of militias, Murr asserted that the Lebanese military is not ready to take on the militias. Murr estimated that it will take another six to eight months of reform and rebuilding until the military could be "counted on." Murr agreed with the idea of low-profile U.S. military teams to assess the needs of the Lebanese military. His hand still bandaged from a car bomb attack, Murr mentioned that he still needs three more operations to repair the damage of the assassination attempt on him in July. Murr also said that he has passed on to Hizballah his awareness of a potential threat against him, in hopes of warding off Hizballah following Syrian orders to kill him. Murr also claimed to have seen an intercepted telephone conversation that suggests Hizballah will adopt a dangerously aggressive stance in the period immediately following the next report of UNIIIC Chief Detlev Mehlis. End summary.

## THE SYRIAN EFFECT LINGERS

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12. (C) On 11/8, NEA DAS Elizabeth Dibble, the Ambassador, the defense attache, and econoff met with Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Elias Murr. Murr began by listing the lingering effects of the Syrian occupation. Fifteen years of Syrian domination of the military and security services has left poor training and an old mentality. New security techniques and a new mentality must be learned by the armed forces. Murr said that the process of transitioning from a "Syrian mentality" is about 70 percent complete. The military is open to change; no one is resisting. Military personnel want to be trained in the United States and in Europe. Murr estimated that about half of Lebanese military equipment was American-made and about half Soviet-made, and all is very old.

13. (C) More importantly, Murr continued, Syria continues to manage several terrorist groups. Murr cited Palestinian armed groups both in and out of the camps, as well as Hizballah with its "well-trained and well-equipped army." Lebanon will never enjoy good security and real change without change in Syria, Murr said. "I am not talking about regime change," Murr immediately clarified, "I talking about a change in mentality." Once the Syrian regime changes the way it thinks, Syrian allies in Lebanon will be cut off from support, asserted Murr.

## NOT READY TO TAKE ON MILITIAS

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14. (C) Dibble pointed out that any progress in Lebanon will be difficult as long as private armies, such as Hizballah, operate freely. Murr replied that, while he agreed, the Lebanese military is not ready deal with the militias. It doesn't have the necessary equipment, training, or mentality. Murr estimated that the military would need six to eight months before "we can count on the Lebanese Armed Forces." Currently, the military can be expected to show its presence, but not to take any action. (Comment: Murr appeared to be referring to the increased army presence near Palestinian militant bases in October. The army did not enter the bases, however, even after a civilian army surveyor was shot and killed. End comment.)

15. (C) The Ambassador asked Murr about a proposed liaison between the military and foreign countries who are willing to provide assistance. Murr, claiming that this was his first day back to work since the attempt on his life in July, asked about the status of this plan. (Note: Murr's secretary told econoff after the meeting that this was not really Murr's first day back. End note.) The Ambassador replied that Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, in Murr's absence, had agreed to a U.S. assessment of the Lebanese military's needs as long as it kept a low profile. The first teams will arrive in November. Murr agreed with this approach and promised to raise the issue with the Lebanese commander-in-chief, with whom he will meet later that afternoon.

## MORE ON MURR

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16. (C) Murr said that he was still facing three more operations to repair the damage of the assassination attempt. He will have another operation on his (still-bandaged) hand, and an operation on each of his ears in the December/January timeframe. Murr preferred to greet us with a gesture over his heart with his damaged right hand rather than shake hands. He said that he had been training for 15 days to sign his name. Murr's head of security also had visible scars on the side of his head.

## Private Aside

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17. (S) Privately, Murr took aside DAS Dibble and the Ambassador to discuss what he believes is recent threat

information against him. He said that he had Georges Khoury, head of the LAF's G-2 (military intelligence) branch visit Hizballah security chief Wafiq Safa' to share with Safa's Murr's information, which in Murr's view implicates Hizballah in a Syrian-inspired plot to murder him. Murr said that he was awaiting an "official response" to Hizballah. Murr also expressed considerable concern that Hizballah will adopt a more aggressive stance once Detlev Mehlis issues his 12/15 report. At that point, Murr said, Hizballah, under Syrian orders, will attempt to provoke Sunni-Shia fighting in Lebanon. Murr claimed to have learned of Hizballah's plans through an intercept of a telephone conversation between Hizballah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah and As-Safir journalist Ibrahim Amin. In dangerous and aggressive ways, Hizballah will show its "true face" after 12/15, Murr claimed. In his view, while this "true face" will be dangerous for Lebanon, at least the other Lebanese will understand at last what they are facing.

COMMENT

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18. (C) Murr seems to be another example of a formerly "pro-Syria" figure making a post-occupation conversion. We note that little more than a year ago, Murr, as Interior Minister, told the Ambassador that Sunni extremists and the Palestinian camps could not be controlled without the help of the Syrian military and intelligence. Now he is talking about ridding the Lebanese military of the vestiges of the Syrian occupation. Of course, Murr's "conversion" was sparked by the 7/12 car bomb attack intended to kill him -- and which Murr believes to be a Syrian-backed operation. End comment.

19. (U) This message has been cleared by DAS Dibble.

MURRAY